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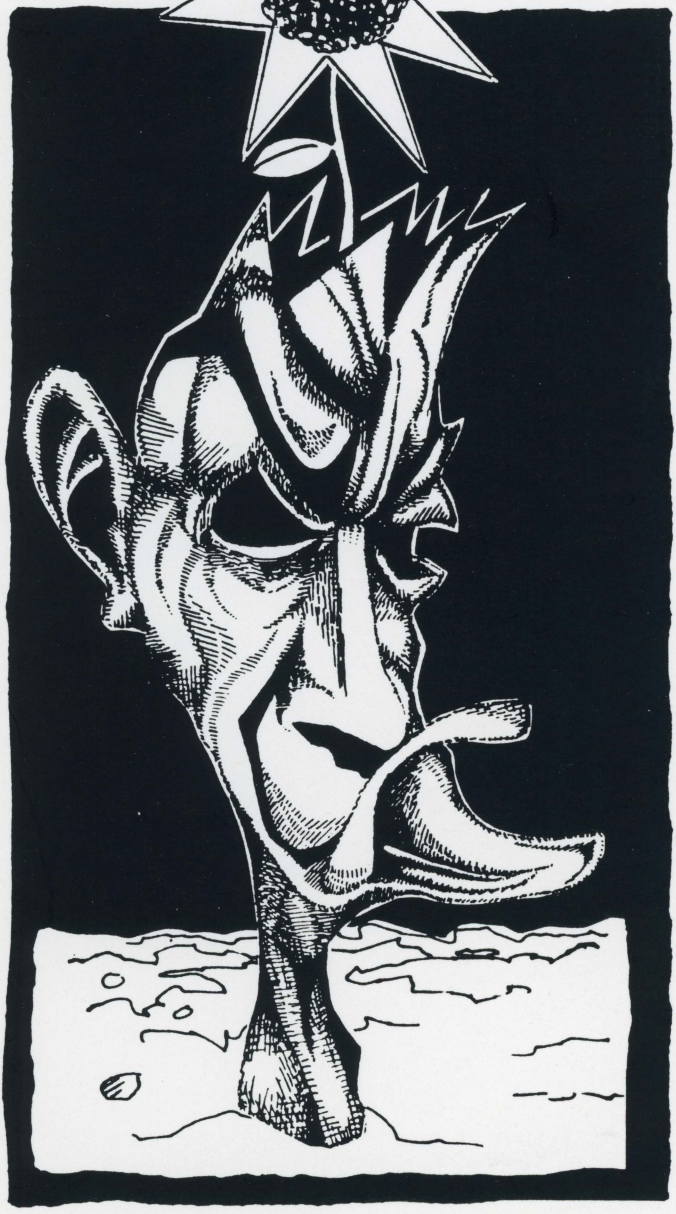

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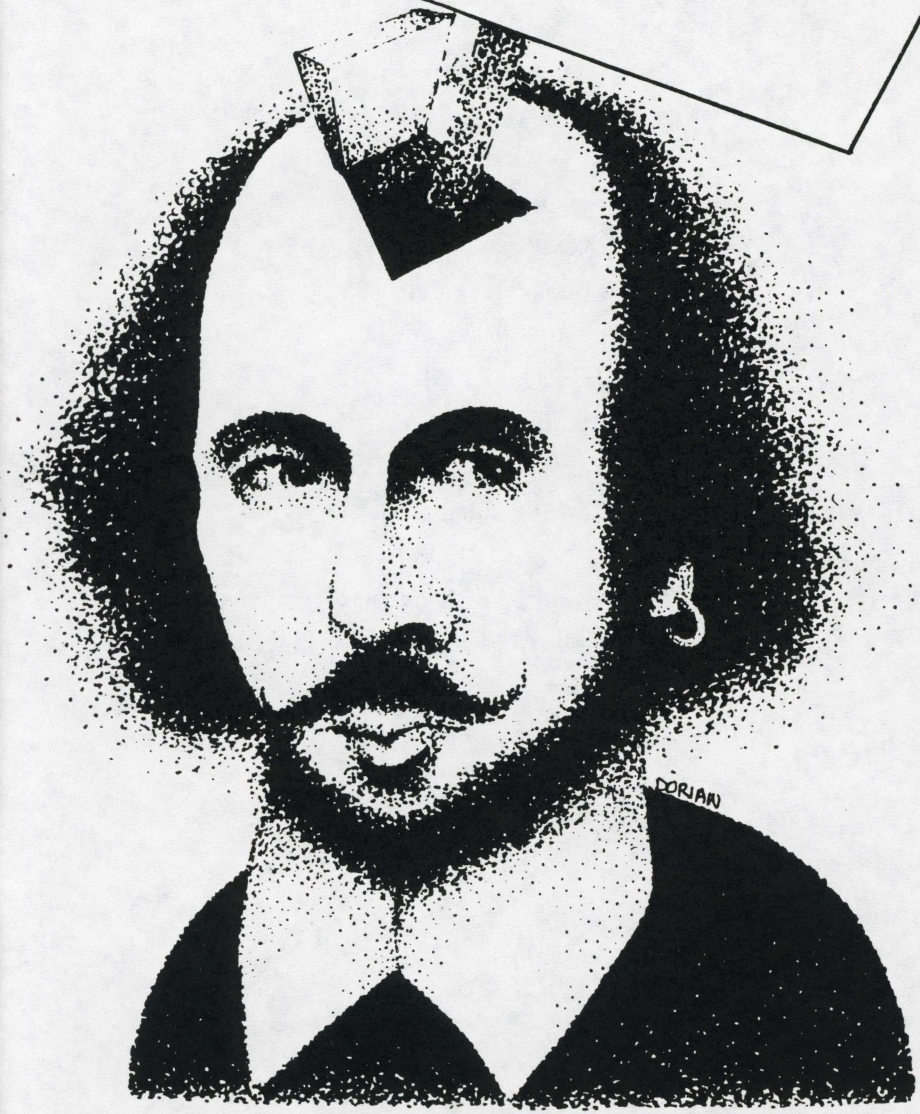

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Table of Contents

	Page
Years Gone By, *Adina Kadden*	1
A Dream Come True, *Kimberly Shewell*	2
Dead Love, *Scott Shrieves*	4
Positive Progress, *J. R.*	5
Reunion, *Susie Dudek*	6
Testify, *Karen Hoeprich*	10
Distant Vietnam, *Trang Ngo*	11
Art, *Patrick Dorian*	16
A Love Story, *Brian Schilpp*	17
These Hands, *Patricia McCoy*	18
Haiku and Cinqaine, *Maggie Carroll*	19
Life After Death, *Brian Robinson*	20
Art, *Patrick Dorian*	21
Past Reflections, *Anonymous*	22
Feed the Flame of Fire, *Adina Kaddin*	26
True Death, *Patricia McCoy*	27
The First Day of School, *Tiffany Vaughan*	28
Rage, *Adina Kadden*	30
Art, *Patrick Dorian*	32
Short poems, *Jason Taft*	33
The Baby-Sitting Nightmare, *Bridgett Simms*	34
Personae, *April Waters*	36
Stunned by Reality, *John Dietz*	37
My Faithful Companion, *Beth Bondroff*	38
To My Siblings, *Sarah Coakley*	40

Years Gone By

Thinking of the years gone by,
an echo of a childhood lost forever,
only to be kept alive in the memory of the privileged
or the haunted . . .

The screams of delight and the cries of sorrow
in that plaintive childish voice,
reverberate in the memory of that one child--
now all grown up.

No one else remembers the years gone by.
At the time none of us thought we could forget;
but, alas, all have--
except for me.
I remember every moment.

Adina Kadden

A Dream Come True

As the door slammed, she cursed the day that she met him. Why did she always gravitate toward the same kind of man, the wrong kind of man? They see a beautiful woman with a little money and consistently turn into blood sucking leeches. Why couldn't she find another Didier?

She sat quietly and remembered what she considered the best day of her life, the day she met a man she could have married under the right circumstances.

I remember getting off the bus and standing mesmerized by the sands as white as snow and the water a shade of blue that is unimaginable unless seen. A light breeze was blowing across my face, bringing with it the smell of French cuisine and ocean water. The tour guide stepped up and told me the name of the beach--Bikini Beach. This seemed ironic due to the fact that nudity was an option. As I listened, I noticed a young man working at the bar and I felt compelled to find out who he was.

I remember the feel of the sand and the cool ocean breeze, as well as the butterflies that were making their way to the pit of my stomach as I got closer to him. I walked toward the bar and his deep brown eyes met mine. He had long dark hair that appeared as silken strands against the backdrop of his golden neck, and his skin looked so smooth that I yearned to run my finger tips from the nape of his neck to the top of his supple shoulders.

He began to speak and his eyes brightened as a smile crossed his moist lips. His Parisian accent gently lapped at my ears as he asked where I was from. I replied that I was from "Baltimore, Maryland." He quickly walked away and returned with the owner who was also from Maryland. Her name was Elisa. She had been living on the island for eight years. I spoke to her about the area she was from, and then she went back to work, leaving me with the young man.

I ordered a drink and smoked a cigarette before I excused myself to go and lay on the beach. I leaned back in my chair and thought of how it would be if we were together. How he would smell and taste, what it would be like to have his body touching mine. I knew that he was watching me as I slowly and sultrily moved my hands to the top string of my bikini. I untied the string

and then moved my hands to the remaining string. I felt his eyes on my back as I let my top fall to the chair beside me.

I wanted to make him aware of every nerve in his body as I stretched my arms above my head, allowing the sun to warm my body the way that I wanted him to warm me. Every inch of my body yearned for his touch, for his warm breath upon my skin. I lay there and quickly fell asleep.

A soft hand on my cheek suddenly pulled me from the vision. I opened my eyes, but I wasn't sure that I wasn't still dreaming. I discovered that my dream had become reality and the young man was standing over me looking into my eyes.

He knelt down beside me and asked my name. I paused for a second and then answered him. He smiled and said that his name was Didier, which I later found out meant desired and beloved. He gently touched my cheek and then my hair with his finger tips while every muscle in my body stretched toward the sensation. I had anticipated the pleasure of his touch but had never imagined it would feel like this. It was the touch that I had always imagined I would one day feel. It was a pleasure that touched me with an uneasy tightness in my stomach and a chill up my spine.

I spent the rest of the trip with him on that beach. I don't know why I left the island without him, but what I do know is that I've never found anyone else like him. I guess I could have stayed in paradise forever and had a dream come true, but I didn't.

Kimberly Shewell

Dead Love

I. *Screams in the dark.*
Lurking within the darkness, between the shadows
Aroused by my own ancient,
Exotic dreams of crimson fluid,
Amidst a timeless array of dying stars
Whose screams will never reach me
Until the screams of *tonight's* victim
Cease to echo and she lies dead,
Rotted and forgotten. . . . . .

II. *Nocturnal flights.*
Vampire bats emerge from an
Ominous cave
As I watch from my chamber window

I hear their wings beat against the
Chilled night air
As their blood-lusting hearts pound viciously
Thundering in my own thirsty veins
Inspiring me to shift from and depart my lofty cell. . .

Nocturnal creatures we are, navigating darkened skies.
In my mind I taste their beautifully disturbing cries,
Lingering through aeons of sanguinary nights that never cease
With this dark, eternal thirst which doth nightly increase
And in my realm of solitude and darkness I see
That with every bloody kill, comes another death in me.

III. *Death of love.*
I keep my tears bound by chains
Of lust, Necessity, and Desire,
Eternally abated by words of deadly seduction
And a heart full of fire.
For if I cry as I did centuries ago
I'd just learn to *love* again
And surely starve to death. . . . . .

Vlad

Positive Progress

Feel like throwing in the towel? Don't be a fool,
Because staying in recovery is much too cool.

My life was like a train running off the tracks
And everything I had was falling between the cracks.
All those nevers came true that I said.
Sometimes, maybe I wished I was dead.

But I took my chance with a new beginning,
For as long as I keep positive, I'm winning.

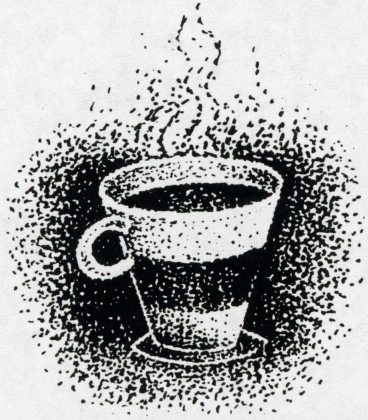
There is still some fight in me.
That's how it will always be.
Hold my head up high, look Doubt in the eye,
And--without a sigh--never say die.

I heard that someone said that I'm in denial.
Who are they to say? I'm not on trial.

I am fearless in my heart; you will see that in my eyes.
Always constant, accurate, intense, and on the rise.
I somehow know that you can understand.
Just for today, I'm going to take a stand.

Today I'm naturally wired and all fired up.
I go to college and drink real coffee out of a bucket.

J. R..--Just Resilient



Reunion

"Nancy, hi!--Don't you recognize me?"

"Amy, is that really you? My god, I almost walked right by you. I'm sorry, you just look so different."

I couldn't believe it. Nancy was my best friend all through junior and senior high school, and here we stood at our twenty year high school reunion and she didn't even recognize me. Even though I've lost close to fifteen pounds since the last time we saw one another, she still should recognize me. When did it happen? When and why had Nancy and I grown so far apart? Had someone told me twenty years ago that Nancy and I would become complete strangers, I would have laughed in their face. There was a time when Nancy and I were inseparable. Now here we were, twenty years later, struggling for something to say.

"So Nance, when you say different, do you mean a good different, or a bad different?"

"Oh--good of course. You look great, Amy, nice and trim."

In order to keep this strained conversation going, I found myself asking the usual litany of questions estranged friends often ask one another.

"Well, Nance, how have you been?"

"Oh--pretty good."

"How's Rick and the kids? Are you two still as inseparable as you were in college?"

"Everyone's fine, and yes Rick and I are still very close. We still do everything together. What about you? Have you found that special someone yet, or are you still into the singles game?"

This pointless conversation seemed to drag on forever, and I was not real comfortable with the direction it was headed. The single life was something that Nancy knew nothing about, and it was not something I wanted to get into, so I began to search for a way to end this conversation. I found myself looking through and over Amy in search of someone or something to put us both out of our misery. Just as I was about to politely excuse myself, the infamous Rick approached Nancy and informed her

that someone over at the buffet table was asking about her. As Nancy and Rick excused themselves and walked away, I began to think about how Nancy and I used to be so close and how conversations between the two of us were never this forced. Not even our first encounter. I can still recall our first meeting and conversation like it was yesterday.

Nancy and I met the year we started seventh grade. It was our first year in a big Junior High School and we both had a lot to be nervous about. Nancy was transferring to the junior high from a small private elementary school. I was transferring to the school from a different city. Needless to say, neither of us knew anyone. As luck would have it, Nancy Baker and Amy Barnes were assigned to the same homeroom. It was within those walls of our first homeroom that Nancy and I became friends.

The first day of school was absolutely terrifying for me. Not only did I not know anyone, but I was certain that I would get lost in the enormous structure that was referred to as a school. As I entered the school, I remember just staring down the long hallways, and seeing what appeared to be thousands of open doors. After walking down several mile-long hallways, I finally reached my destination, room 204.

I reluctantly entered the room and began searching for a friendly face. All I remember seeing was a group of blank seventh grade faces. As I stared more, the faces began to blur, like an under-developed Polaroid picture. After I stood there for what seemed to be an hour, I decided it was time to make my first crucial decision in junior high. Where should I sit? I was not quite sure of the seating procedure in junior high. Elementary school had been much simpler. Our names were always on our assigned desks. It was at this point that I came to the conclusion that I missed elementary school, and junior high was something to dislike. I began walking around searching for a desk when I heard a friendly voice call out to me.

"Why don't you sit here? No one is sitting at this desk."

"Thanks." I collapsed in the chair and took a deep breath. Nancy's invitation had not come a moment too soon. I could feel myself begin to shake all over with nervous energy and I desperately needed to sit down. Although I was trying to mask how nervous and upset I was, I was certain that everyone in the

room, including the teacher, thought I was a little baby who couldn't handle a big school.

Of course now, looking back, none of those kids in that room, least of all the teacher, probably even noticed me. They were all most likely sitting there in their chairs anxiously awaiting their next seventh grade challenge.

"Hi, my name is Nancy," said the friendly voice next to me.

"Hi, I'm Amy."

"I'm new to this school and . . ." Before Nancy could even finish her sentence I felt an instant kinship with her. ". . . I don't know anyone," she continued.

"I just moved to Rochester from Buffalo this summer, and I don't know anyone either." Before the conversation went any further, the homeroom bell rang and our first day of seventh grade had officially begun.

The morning went fairly smoothly. We had a lot of new school orientation rituals to learn. Once our homeroom teacher reviewed the schedules, locations of important offices, and rules, she began to hand out the dreaded locker combination assignments.

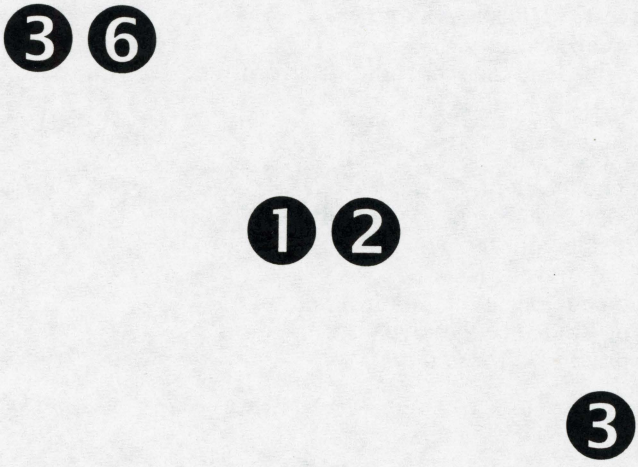
Learning the correct way to work a locker combination is often the first test of adulthood for many students. Watching students struggle with locker combinations is like watching an unpredictable volcano. One never knows when it will erupt into disaster. Fortunately for me, locker practice was a breeze. I had a combination lock for my bike, so this was old news to me. As for Nancy, her luck was not so good. Out of the corner of my eye I saw her, struggling, and on the verge of eruption. I walked over to her and began to show her how to do it.

"Spin the dial two turns to the right, and then stop at 36. Make one complete spin to the left, passing 12 one time. Then on the second time around stop at 12. Now turn back to the right, and stop at 3 the first time." It was like magic. Nancy unlocked her locker, and after only three tries, she mastered the art of combination locks. She managed to successfully handle her first real challenge of seventh grade.

Not only had Nancy unlocked her locker that day, but with a couple of spins of the dial, we managed to unlock a friendship that lasted for six solid years. Was it possible to regain that strong friendship that meant so much to us at one time, I wondered. At that moment I noticed Nancy walking by, I grabbed her arm and said, "Hey Nance, remember 36-12-3?"

"Yeah, I remember, Amy. I remember like it was yesterday."

Susie Dudek



Testify

I saw you cryin' in the street,
Head bowed.
Tears flowin' to the ground,
Empty and sad,
With nothin' to be glad.
A slave to your master, the habit.
I held your hand.
Showed you God's love.
Pray it'll give you somethin' to think of.

CHORUS

God's love,
The Son of Man,
Came to save us all, so stand
And testify, "Jesus is Lord."
The tomb is empty,
The price paid that we couldn't afford.
Rejoice, the King is here.

I saw you sittin' near the wall,
Hardened to it all,
So tough, you can do it yourself,
Yet inside your tears melt.
Tried to be your friend
So you could see it all in the end.
So you could see the love,
The price paid for you.

REPEAT CHORUS

I saw you starin' at the floor,
Tired of life and its grind.
I wish you could soar
On wings of eagles.
Made me pray for you all the more
That someday you'll proclaim,
"Jesus Christ" as the victorious name.

REPEAT CHORUS

Karen Hoeprich

Distant Vietnam

As I turned onto the sullen street of the Northwest Park apartment complex, a cold chill rushed through my body. The many observable changes to the once familiar apartment complex stirred a sense of fear within me. This neighborhood was my home sixteen years ago. I remember playing with my grade school friends on this street. I also remember how clean and safe the neighborhood was at Northwest Park. The grass was once alive and green. Every Sunday, the neighborhood was quiet with an air of tranquillity. There were always many friendly faces and the fear of danger did not cross my mind. Now, when I neared Beacon Road, I could see a woman rushing her son into their home as sounds of sirens echoed by. The sky began to darken as I hurriedly searched for apartment 518. As I continued toward the home of Mr. Nguyen, I noticed the many broken beer bottles among patches of dead yellow grass, and I heard the whining of hungry alley cats.

When I finally reached my destination, I breathed a sigh of relief and anxiously rang the door bell. A smiling middle-aged man opened the door. In his native tongue, Mr. Nguyen welcomed me into his home. As I shook his hand, I could feel its roughness and could only guess that hard labor was the cause. He offered me a seat on an old wooden chair. My eyes began to wander throughout his apartment. In one corner of the room was a tattered brown sofa. In the opposite corner, a wooden crucifix rested on a manmade altar. From a distance, I could hear the voices of children behind a closed door. Within the next moment, Mrs. Nguyen greeted me carrying a tray with tea and sweet cakes. The aroma of jasmine tea stirred a pleasant vision of my grandmother sipping tea in her garden in Vietnam as she watched the sun rise. I thanked Mrs. Nguyen for her trouble and turned my attention back to my host.

Mr. Nguyen started our conversation by pointing to the many framed pictures of his parents and ancestors that were displayed on the altar. He said that these pictures were the keys to understanding and unlocking his background.

Mr. Nguyen, along with his wife and four children, immigrated to America two years ago. He is one of my Dad's closest friends. My Dad and Mr. Nguyen grew up together in a little town just outside of Saigon. He claims that life in the United States is very different from in his native land. At times,

he can feel an unending ache in his heart that longs to return home. However, he now accepts that his yearning is impossible at his age. His desire to see his homeland again will probably not be fulfilled. His last glimpse of Vietnam was through a small aircraft window.

Mr. Nguyen was once a decorated Colonel in the Vietnam Airforce. When news of the Viet Cong's invasion traveled throughout the countryside, Mr. Nguyen refused to surrender. In his attempt to oppose the Communist government, he was forced to be reeducated in a concentration camp. Mr. Nguyen's concern for his family's future gave him the strength to endure the hardship forced upon him by the communists. The communist's cruelty during his long years of imprisonment scarred him physically and emotionally. The living conditions in the camp were unbearable. Mr. Nguyen was forced to do heavy labor that consisted of working on dry, infertile farmlands. He was also forced to dig up land mines left after the war. Almost every night he returned to prison exhausted and hungry. Even the hard dusty floor seemed a comfortable place. Sometimes, sleep did not offer any comfort after Mr. Nguyen's stressful day. His nights were often filled with terrible nightmares of the communists' brutality to him and his family. At times, the communists would starve him for regressing to his old beliefs. Mr. Nguyen's exhaustion from malnourishment and heavy labor did not receive sympathy but instead harsh treatment for his slow work. He was often beaten and tortured to the point where he thought that through death he could escape. Despite his pain and suffering, his love for his wife and children gave him hope and the will to survive.

After ten years of reeducation and prison life, Mr. Nguyen was finally released when the communist government no longer saw him as a threat. His freedom from the communists' cruelty became a reality through the HO American government program. This program allowed servicemen who were in opposition to the communists' political beliefs to emigrate to the U.S. and start a life free of the communists' oppression. The program allowed him and his family to begin a new life. Most important, the program provided an opportunity for his children to have a better and more promising future. Although he is grateful for the opportunity to create a more hopeful life, he often wonders what his life would be like if Vietnam was never lost to the communists.

Vietnam was home to his ancestors and held all the traditions and history of his family. The communists robbed him of the freedom to lead his life and raise his children in the only home he knew. Although he is thankful for a second chance at life, he often feels like a stranger in "melting pot" America. He claims that the American culture with its fast lifestyle and confusing language is sometimes too overwhelming for him to adopt and to understand. With each passing day, Mr. Nguyen's longing to return to Vietnam grows stronger. He wants to live in a place where he is familiar with the landscape, the language and the culture. Mr. Nguyen believes that in Vietnam, children were obedient to their parents and there was much respect for the elderly. He feels that Vietnam would offer him a sense of belongingness that he craves. Vietnam was where his life started and Mr. Nguyen had hoped to live his final days there.

During the past two years, life in America has been challenging. Mr. Nguyen faced life's hardship while working several odd jobs and struggling to communicate with Americans. In his quest to adjust to the American way of life, he found himself comparing the American way of life with the life he once knew in Vietnam. Though he tries not to compare Vietnam with America, he sometimes can't help himself. There are so many things that he misses about his country. He claims that at his age not reflecting on his early life is so hard. He reminisces about the days when he would wake in his beach home to the sound of crashing waves. After a refreshing swim in the clear blue water, he would enjoy a pot of hot jasmine tea on the beautiful white sandy shore beneath the many swaying palm trees. From afar, he could see fishermen's boats ready to sail out onto the sea to make a living. Soon, it would be time for him to get ready for work.

Mr. Nguyen remembers hearing the many different Vietnamese dialects in the streets of Saigon as he was driven to work. His ride to work often reminded him of the stories his grandfather told him about the rich history of the evolution of the Vietnamese language. Vietnam's language was adopted from the Chinese. Through Western influence hundreds of years ago, Vietnam became the only Eastern country to adopt Western characters into written language. Mr. Nguyen can remember vividly the different Vietnamese dialects radiating from the open markets lining the streets of Saigon. The voices of Northerners and Southerners tried to dominate one another, hoping to make a sale that day. The voices of the city's inhabitants bargained with

the vendors for the best possible deal. In the distance, children were playing and trying to show off their newly learned words in the courtyard of an elementary school. When he reached the Airforce Base in Saigon, he resumed his duties as Colonel. He had many responsibilities and was respected by his peers and cadets. They heard his words and carried out his orders. But in America, he often feels helpless and disabled with this foreign language. He often finds it difficult to make others understand him. Mr. Nguyen feels discouraged and frustrated when he can't express his thoughts clearly and is continually misunderstood. He is also saddened by the realization that his prestige as a Colonel no longer exists. His sense of importance has greatly diminished. Mr. Nguyen said that when others look at him, he feels that all they see is a minority whose hair is too dark, whose eyes are too small, and whose past no longer matters. Mr. Nguyen never thought that he would find himself in an environment where he was in the minority and had to struggle to make others understand what he had to say. In a way, he sometimes feels that he did not fully appreciate the ability to talk with the authority that he once had.

During our conversation, my eyes began to focus on a simple painting of a lady with long black silky hair on one of the walls. She was wearing a traditional Vietnamese garment and was standing beside a beautiful lily pond. All women and young girls in Vietnam usually wear this particular garment. Mr. Nguyen's eyes followed my gaze and asked if I ever owned one of those dresses called "ao dai." I shook my head and wondered why my parents never suggested such a garment for me to wear. Mr. Nguyen misses the image of the traditional Vietnamese women. They had long black flowing hair and would wear those beautiful "ao dai." He let out a sigh and said that he hoped his two daughters of ten and twelve years of age would keep this Vietnamese custom.

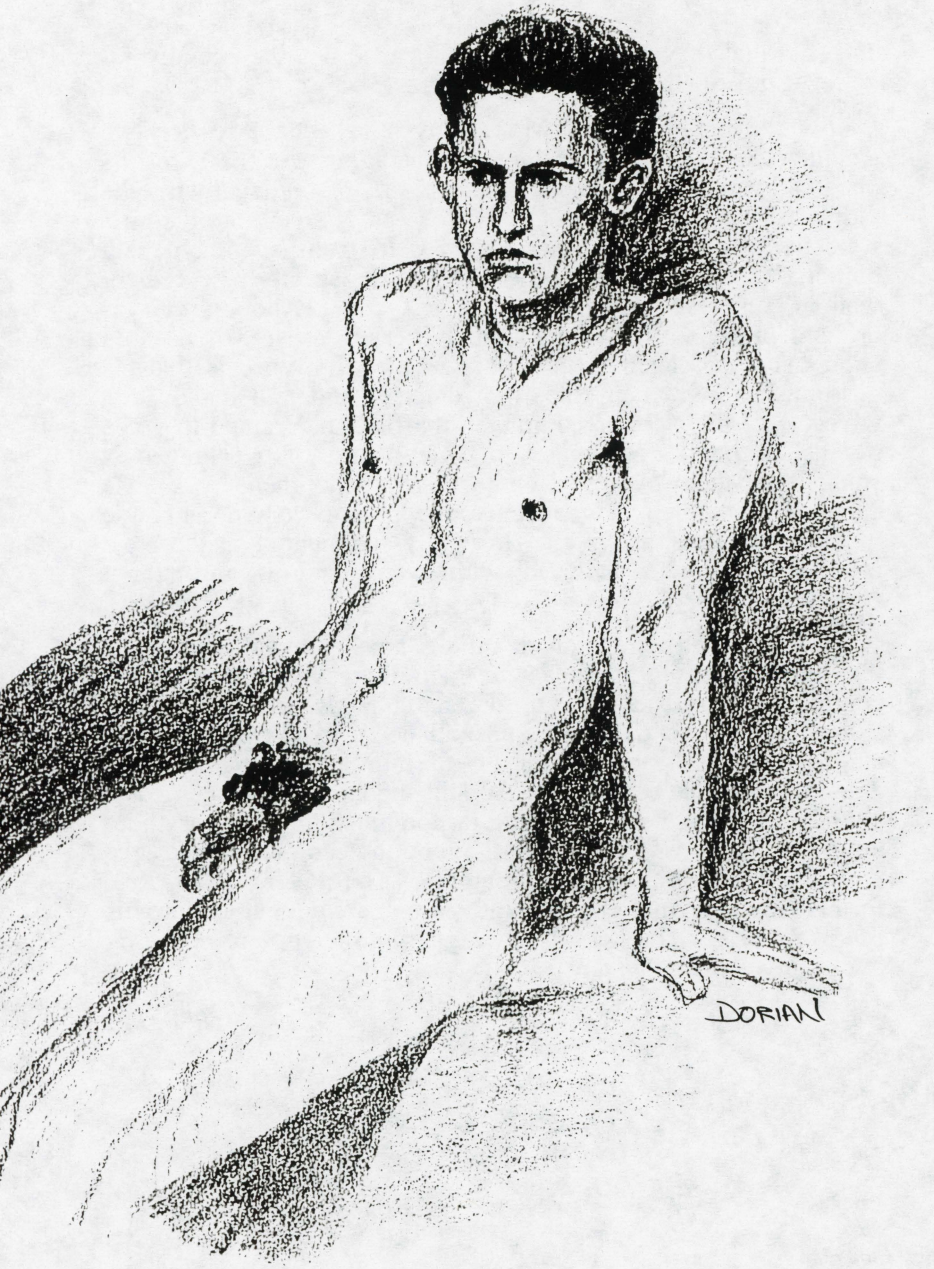
As the evening progressed, Mr. Nguyen and his wife asked me to join them for dinner and to continue the interview afterwards. I graciously accepted the invitation and thanked them. Mr. Nguyen said that he was thankful that he can still have a traditional Vietnamese dinner in this foreign land. He is amazed at the many commercially prepared foods in the American market. In Vietnam, meals were always prepared from fresh, raw materials. He smiled and said that he could never get used to pizzas and hamburgers for the rest of his life. I laughed

and said that they're often very practical to have, especially for college students living away from home.

Within the next moment, Mrs. Nguyen called out to her two daughters to help with the dinner preparation. As the two girls obediently answered their mother's call, I wondered why she didn't ask her sons to help too. I told Mr. Nguyen that his girls were very good children and asked if his sons ever help with dinner. When he said that the kitchen was strictly reserved for women, his response did not surprise me. Although I was brought up in a Vietnamese home, everyone shared household chores such as cleaning and cooking. Mr. Nguyen said that his girls must accept their roles as women in order to make good wives some day. I was completely baffled and wanted to voice my belief, but I decided not to offend him. Mr. Nguyen is stunned by the way women in America lead their lives. He cannot believe their independence as working women, as single mothers, and even as wives. He finally commented on the great changes that have occurred with women's role throughout America's history.

Although Mr. Nguyen misses his homeland, he knows that he must accept and adapt to this new way of life. He will continue to carry Vietnam's unforgettable landscape, its language and cultural beliefs in his mind and heart. He will teach his children all that was passed on to him by his parents and grandparents. He claims that the adjustment has not been easy, but he knows that he has suffered far too much to give everything up now. He knows in his heart that nothing can ever remedy the unending ache for his beloved country. As a reflection of his love for his wife and children, Mr. Nguyen will continue to endure his life in America. But he will never give up the hope of returning to distant Vietnam one day.

Trang Ngo


DORIAN

A Love Story

She smiles a lot--acts innocent in the eyes
of all. She has a bounce to her walk, but still walks
like everyone else--yet she is Unique--from those
that walked before her--Close to my Heart.

His smile when he doesn't worry about how it looks--
is the way she likes it. She likes the way--
he talks about--the things that matter to him.
The Little caring acts he performs--
get her attention--even though unnoticed--
by others.

He likes the way she holds his hand--and rubs
her thumb--back and forth--letting him know--
she's there. She Likes the Little touches before--
a kiss--to actually make it--something--something
special--When it can be just an Average kiss.

He likes the way she listens--with her heart--and
stays interested even when she--should be Bored.

Held in his Arms--is where she likes to be. Comfortable
--is how she Feels--when she's in his arms. Thoughts
--Sincerity--and his Understandings--of life
--she likes.

He likes making her--Feel good--about herself--and
then doing what he can do to make her happy--Cause He
enjoys It.
She Feels--Secure--and He likes--being--the
Security She needs.
They make It--and--make It happily.

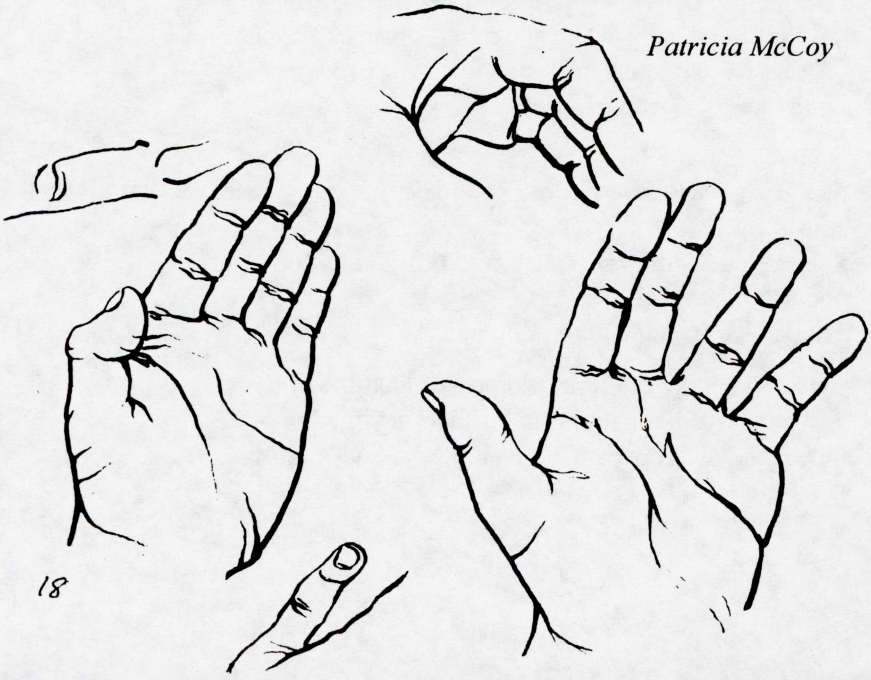
Cause--They give of one another--so that the other
will--have a little happiness. And--They make it --
they stand--in between--give and take--and--simply
give of each other. . .

Brian Schilpp

These Hands

The yellow light from the candle
sparsely illuminates my hands.
Hands that illustrate so much.
They reveal my young age.
Being slender and long, they show my frame.
Expressive as I am, they illustrate my excitement and hesitation,
Recording my determination with the existence of calluses and scratches worn like a merit badge.
They can both be gentle and very strong:
Gentle when touching my love,
Strong when surviving the world's harshness.
This skin, these joints, these digits are all mine to weather through
life and display my experiences in historical scars and lines.
Few will have the insight to recognize and understand.
I will not be ashamed of these hands when I am older for they will
have served me well as extensions of my desire and will to live.

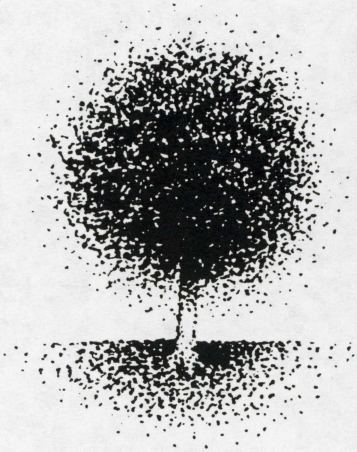
Patricia McCoy



Cotton ball blossoms
create a downy blanket
and swaddle the Earth.

Fuzzy yellow weed
mistaken for a flower,
plucked in ignorance.

Full moon
in autumn white,
illuminates the skies,
its glory unmatched by the glow
below.



Maggie Carroll

Life After Death

Many ancient civilizations believed in burying their dead along with things that they would need to survive in the afterlife. If this tradition were still in place, and I died today, here is a list of things that I would have buried with me. I am quite sure that I could not live without these three things.

The first thing I would like to have buried with me is a television. That's right, the Cathode Ray Tube that everyone in America bows down to every night. If you drive down any street in America on any given evening, almost every house that you will pass will have a mysterious blue glow emitting from it. Yes, I would definitely have to bring my television.

Another thing that I would take to the grave with me is my subscription to *Rolling Stone Magazine*. This will tell me everything I need to know about how to live. It tells me what is cool, and what is not cool. Who is cool, and who is not cool. It tells me who to vote for, what kind of music to listen to, and even what clothes to wear. Yes, I could certainly not get by without my *Rolling Stone Magazine*.

The final thing that I would take with me to the afterlife would be a computer. That way, I would never have to actually leave the casket. I could virtually go wherever I wanted to go. If I wanted to go to heaven, I could just log on to the Heaven Web Page and there I would be. Or I could even visit Hell with just a few mouse clicks. What's more, if I wanted to haunt someone or visit relatives, just a few clicks, and I could be in the spirit world. The computer is the most essential unit for survival.

Those are the three things I would take with me to my grave to make my afterlife one of convenience. All three items are essential to my survival, and I could not die without them.

Brian Robinson

Past Reflection

There was no light at this hour on the seventeenth day of November 1994. The roads and gardens around the neighborhood lay quiet in the night. The houses were set about a mile apart, suggesting the desire for privacy. I kept on walking faster with every step, hearing his voice, his words spoken a few hours ago. I searched for the familiar road where my shoes had walked a thousand times. As my eyes became accustomed to the dark, I nearly missed the road which led to the Taylor's summer house. It was a long white road, straight as a knife, leading up to the large, three-story house on Glen Brook Lane. The house sat on the top of the hill, its giant form looming over the land below. Nothing moved at this hour. Nothing moved on the road, except the sound of my footsteps. The air was still and the world was quiet. Continuing up the hill, I passed the orchard, where during past summer months, I lay beneath the maple trees and slept in the cool breeze. Now, moonlight was falling on the orchard, the brook below the slope, and the spruce boughs tossing in the night wind beyond it. The bygone days were blown away. It must have been more than two years since I was last here, and so much had changed in the family I'd known half my lifetime.

The Taylors haven't stayed in the country summer house for the last two summers, though gardeners and house cleaners were still maintaining it. Mark Ramsey Taylor, II, was a businessman who traveled a lot, and left his wife home to take care of Mark Ramsey Taylor, III. When Mark II was home, he either nagged at his son to keep on making good grades in school or hit his son because he didn't make the honor roll. The physical abuse had stopped six years ago when Mark took a train to Canada over the high school winter break and stayed with some friends. His parents didn't know where he was for half a year. Two years after that incident, the family went into counseling, but Mark's grades seemed to keep on getting progressively worse. He confessed to me the summer before our senior year in high school, when we were lying beneath the maple trees, that he realized he couldn't please his father no matter how hard he tried.

"Why bother trying to please the great man when everything I do is always not good enough? I don't care anymore."

After a pause, he continued angrily, "He never told me he loved me or asked how I'm doing overall, like most parents do.

But this is my life and I'm not going to let him control me any longer. I'm going to do what I want!"

As I made my way up the road, I could still hear those words ringing in my ears as if the conversation took place yesterday. Now everything surrounding the house seemed too quiet. Mark had come up here to visit the house alone this autumn. Slowly, I mounted the front steps of the stone house. I bent down and lifted the welcome mat but didn't see the expected house key. The wind was beginning to blow steady now and I shivered at the coldness. I straightened and looked around to see nothing but the dark, long road, like an endless tunnel reaching out to capture any poor soul walking at this hour. The trees lining the road cast elongated shadows of arm-like branches that extended yearningly outward. The silence magnified every small sound: the snap of a twig underfoot and my own uneven breathing. I scanned the white porch and recalled him saying something about the key being in the pocket of a shirt hanging on some bushes. I saw the metal key dangling from its chain outside the pocket of the torn summer shirt he seemed fond of wearing when he came here.

The wooden door creaked loudly at my entrance. There was no light in the foyer, or in any part of the house. Knowing my way around, I headed straight for the Tiffany lamp on the Victorian table in front of me. I switched it on to reveal the familiar sight of a line of family portraits hanging on both sides of the hallway. Five of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor's wedding pictures in gold-leaf frames occupied the first row. Their only child's school pictures from first to twelfth grade looked out from behind the glass of the same gold-leaf frames on the second and third row. The earlier pictures displayed smiles, baring missing teeth, while the high school pictures showed a few half-smiling faces. Glancing down at the table, I recognized Mark's baby pictures in silver frames next to the Tiffany lamp.

Remembering why I was here, I rushed up the winding stairs to his bedroom at the end of the hallway. I dashed in in my usual way without knocking, only to be greeted by a mocking echo of my voice whispering "Mark?" The room was a wide chamber with the door at one end, a lone window at the other. The moon had gone, hidden by the hills, leaving the room in such darkness that it took me a minute or two to find the lamp next to the queen-size bed. The room was empty and his bed had not been slept in. Strangely, the window was shut; I went across the

room, unbarred it, and flung it wide open to let in the night air. I leaned out over the sill and viewed the whole orchard below.

Unexpectedly, a flash of light shone from afar through a gap in the trees, and I wondered if someone was coming up Glen Brook Lane at this hour. The yard below was in total darkness and I could not make out the black shapes among the shadows. Turning away from the window, I looked around the empty room and was conscious of an uncomfortable conviction that I had lost Mark. A gust of wind swept through the deserted room, setting the curtains flapping and bringing with it the chilly night air.

I knew at that moment where Mark was. I rushed across the room, catching a brief glimpse of the baseball trophies neatly lining the shelf to the right side of his bed. I closed the door against the whirling wind and heard the first drops of rain coming down. I took one last glance over my shoulder at the closed door behind and heaved a sad sigh, turned and went back down the stairs, knowing what to expect.

I stumbled through the archway of the foyer, past the living room with its Queen Anne furniture, made a sharp left, and halted at the narrow hallway that divided the garage and the laundry room. At the garage door I stood for a few minutes under the shadow of the hanging spider plants. I could hear a gust of wind whining through the bushes outside. My hands shaking, I turned the brass knob and found myself in a misted garage. The shadowy enclosure was about fifteen feet square. In the middle of the garage sat Mark II's prized 1969 Ferrari. Its shining surface, red as a Fourth of July firecracker, its hood flaming hot to the touch, had been humming away all night. The swirling mass of smoke curled from the exhaust like an active volcano and the smell of fumes filled the air with a suffocating, sweetly pungent flavor. The wheels stood stationary, their rubber texture clean, never having met with any road surfaces. I came to a stop within a foot of the driver's side door and gripped both of my hands together, my knuckles turned white. As I came nearer to the car, I glimpsed a five-fingered projection behind the rolled-down window, a bluish-purplish-gray mass, limp and lifeless. Suddenly I felt lightheaded, and an ice-cold shiver tingled down my spine. I slumped to the ground, clutching at my chest. I couldn't cry nor close my eyes. I couldn't breathe for a full minute. Lightheaded. Maybe it was from the fumes?

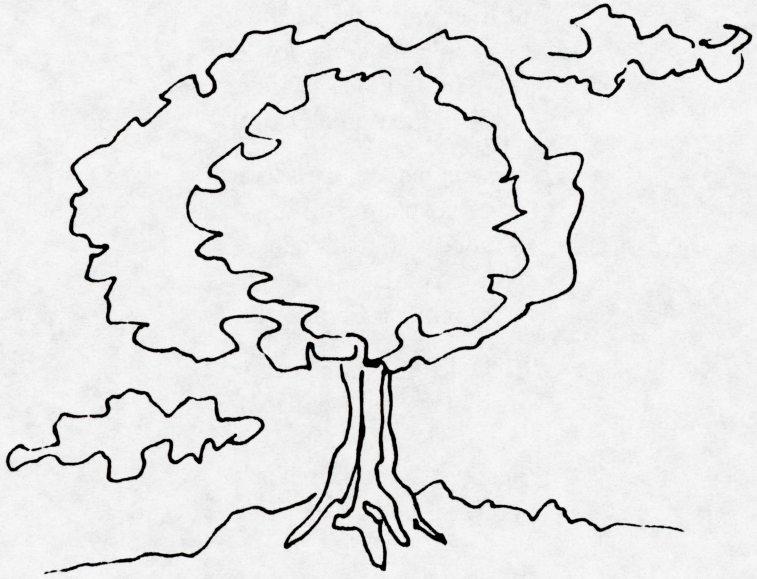
As dawn approached, I could hear that the car had stopped its incessant hum. It stood there in the silver-misted garage, knowing that it had completed its task. Slowly I got off the cold floor and heard voices anxiously calling out from the hallway. I closed the garage door and came face to face with Mr. and Mrs. Taylor.

"Where's Mark? Where's Mark?" Mr. Taylor demanded.

"He called us to come over, but didn't say why. Why are you here? Has something happened?" Mrs. Taylor pleaded with me.

I was oblivious to their cries. I walked away from their anxious expressions and climbed the stairs again. "Mark?" But all I heard was the chilly room echoing his question, repeating it again and again: do you love me? . . . you love me . . . love . . .

Anonymous



Feed The Flame Of Fire

It is hungry. Feed it.
To feed the flame of fire
means death,
the everlasting sleep of death.

The stench, oh, the stench
of human flesh burning is so strong,
the odor is so overpowering.
People running with the flames of fire
eating up their hair.

The pain, oh, the pain
of their waking moments.
Does it purge all past sins?
Nay, it is only a cure for the sickness
that God has dealt out.

The destruction, oh, the destruction
of lives and families alike.
Of the people watching loved ones
take part in the sacrifice,
to feed the flame of fire.

The screams, oh, the screams
of the people falling
unto their death beds,
as the pearls of last light
wink out. Forever.

The death, oh, the death
of so many innocent souls.
For what?
For what? you might ask.
To feed the flame of fire.

Adina Kadden

True Death

The cold wind whips through me.
I am an empty capsule whose walls cannot feel its rough touch.
I've killed all that has been hurt in me.
Now there is nothing, nothing but empty walls
echoing the sound of the wind.
The sleet falls on my head like tiny hammers
punishing me for what I've done.
The Words, "How could you! How could you destroy
the only thing you have? . . . yourself."
What is left but pain now!
The kind of sorrow felt when you lose
your best and most precious friend.
I am my own worst enemy.
The sinister knight on the black horse
Whose purpose is to demean and demolish.
Those broken and burned cities are my weather-beaten heart.
It cannot house love anymore.
Love cannot flourish in a place of rooting death.

I am.

Patricia McCoy

The First Day of School

Mrs. Lacey Linn-Parker walked into the classroom, excited about her first teaching job. School was going to start in one week, and she knew that everything had to be perfect. Twenty-seven kindergartners would then arrive, ready to start the first day of their school careers. Mrs. Linn-Parker started by opening a big box of supplies that she had brought from home. As she opened the box, her gaze fell upon several multicolored alphabet strips she had bought. They were big and colorful, and a picture of an animal accompanied each letter. She could remember the first time she had seen strips like these. She was five years old, and it had been the most horrible day of her life. Only the alphabet strips had gotten her through it. As she held the strips up to the light, her mind drifted back to that one day, many years ago.

The first thing that five-year-old Lacey noticed when she walked into the room was the huge alphabet that stretched across one wall, above the windows. She had seen the alphabet before. Her mom had taught her all the letters, but she had never seen them like this. They were huge and colorful, and each one was accompanied by a picture of an animal. Lacey started to name them, "A, B, C, D, . . ." when a tall pretty woman bent down to her and said, "Hi, my name is Miss Sara. You must be Lacey Linn." Miss Sara then pointed to a large red carpet.

Several children were already sitting on the carpet in a circle. Lacey knew what a circle was, and she was proud to tell Miss Sara. "Circle."

"Yes, Lacey, that's very good. Now, why don't you have a seat with the other children until we are ready to start."

Lacey sat down in an empty space between a boy wearing a red baseball cap and a girl with yellow pigtails. She looked around at the other children nervously. She felt so small around the noisy group of kindergartners. They were talking and laughing merrily with their friends. She looked up to see the familiar letters on the wall. Those letters were the only thing she knew, and they seemed somehow comforting, "E, F, G, H, . . ."

"Do you want some candy?" Lacey turned around to see the yellow-pigtailed girl holding in her hand the largest piece of candy Lacey had ever seen. It was round and purple and the size

of a shooter marble. "So, do you want it? My sister gave it to me."

Desperate for a friend, Lacey shoved the massive gum ball into her mouth. The piece of candy made her cheek bulge out like a hungry chipmunk's. She had barely managed to croak out a thank you when Miss Sara's voice echoed throughout the classroom. "Lacey Linn, what is in your mouth?"

Embarrassed, Lacey looked confusedly at the pretty teacher. Her mouth was so full of candy that all she could do was stare at Miss Sara and shake her head. She continued to recite the comforting letters in her head, "I, J, K, L, . . ."

"Well, Lacey," her teacher began, "Whatever it is, please throw it in the trash."

With a bright red face, Lacey stood up and made her way through the crowd of "good" kindergartners. As she walked toward the large green trashcan in the corner, she kept herself from bursting into tears by continuing her letters, "M, N, O, P."

She leaned over the green metal can, "Q, R, S," and spit the gum ball into the darkness, "T, U, V." When the candy hit the bottom, a loud CLANG resonated through the room. As she repeated to herself, "W, X, Y, Z," she thought she could hear laughter coming from behind her. Her heart beat faster. Here it was, the first day of school, and she was already in trouble.

When Lacey lifted her head, she was almost afraid to look. She just knew that everyone was laughing at her. As she raised her head, she could hear Miss Sara exclaim to the children, "My God, how did all that candy even fit into her mouth?" With her face burning, Lacey sat down and lowered her head. When she got up the nerve to raise it, she began reciting, "A, B, C."

Twenty-five-year-old Lacey Linn-Parker gazed at the letters thoughtfully. She knew exactly where to put them. Along the wall, above the windows, was a perfect place. They could remind her of what was really important about teaching, the well-being of the children. No child in her class would ever have to suffer the embarrassment that she did. And maybe, just maybe, they would be there to comfort a child just like her.

Tiffany Vaughan

Rage

The white hot searing pain
flashed through her head.
The roar of flowing blood
filled her ears.
Her hands stiffened and curled into claws
that longed to rip his throat out.
The burning hot tears
threatened to overflow,
as he droned on unaware and unsuspecting
of the wave of anger he had brought to the surface.
Thoughts of murder flashed through
her troubled head.
His head and hands lying on his desk
severed from his body.
His skull, caved in,
with gray brain matter leaking out.
His twisted limbs hanging from the ceiling
like a child's mobile, softly swaying in the breeze.
But would his ultimate death cure her
of her thus forth undying rage?
Not likely, for the pain runs too deeply
in her tortured soul.

Adina Kadden

DORIAN

? . . . ? . . . ?

Senile and I'm lost.
Senile and I can't remember.
Senile and I'm only 20.

Her eyes were a pair of assassins dressed in
Black.
Cold, sharpened knives. A heart attack.
I couldn't speak.
I just stared back.

11/4/95

I'm just a vulture,
Perched on a cactus,
In the middle of the desert,
Waiting for something to die.

This is one of those days
When everything that crawls
Or slithers by seems
Immortal.

Jason Taft

The Baby-Sitting Nightmare

The thunder rolled and the lightning lit up the house as if there were strobe lights dancing on the walls. It seemed like the worst storm of the year, but the kids were finally asleep, and I could relax. I decided to see what was on TV. As I flipped through the channels, I found the first *Friday The 13th.* I could not help watching. Jason was killing everyone, just like usual. All of a sudden, I heard a noise coming from the back of the house. The house was an old, two story, brick home that creaked and made many noises. I decided that it was probably just the wind blowing or the trees shaking. I could feel that my body had gotten tense, but I knew that was because I was in a very old house, watching a horror movie.

Halfway through the movie, I heard another sound, as if someone was tapping on the window. This time the sound did not go away. I began to get frightened. I stopped and listened. My breathing was shallow. I shook. I knew that I had to check on the children to make sure they were okay. I stood up and bolted towards the stairs. I did not look in either direction, fearing that I would find something looking back at me. When I reached the top of the stairs, I heard the gentle sounds of two little boys fast asleep.

Now the hard part. I had to make it back downstairs to the couch without seeing anyone or anyone seeing me. I decided to turn on some lights, just in case someone was outside. I figured they would think that there were people home. As I reached the bottom stair, I glanced out the window to my left. I SCREAMED ! ! ! There, staring in the window, was a dark, tall figure. I could not tell what he looked like because he was wearing a dark overcoat. I was scared. I did not know what to do. I ran past the kitchen and into the living room. I shook all over. My lips were trembling with fear. I reached for the phone, but it was dead. I knew I was going to die. I could hear my heartbeat. It was so loud and fast. I knew I could not go past the window again. I cried. I sat there and cried like a baby.

I knew I had to calm down and check on the boys. I also did not want whoever was outside to know I was having a nervous breakdown. It seemed as if I could not get close enough to myself. I wanted to crawl into my skin. For an adult, I was not handling the situation maturely. I stood up, looked across the room, and leaped for the stairs. I could not help but look out of

the corner of my eye to see the figure now beating on the window. I though I would puke. Things got cloudy. I felt very dizzy. Would I ever make it up the stairs? What seemed like forever was only a few seconds. I crawled into the boys' room and bawled my eyes out. It looked as if I was having a seizure from shaking so bad. Terrible thoughts raced through my mind, and I was convinced that Jason was downstairs waiting for me with his ax.

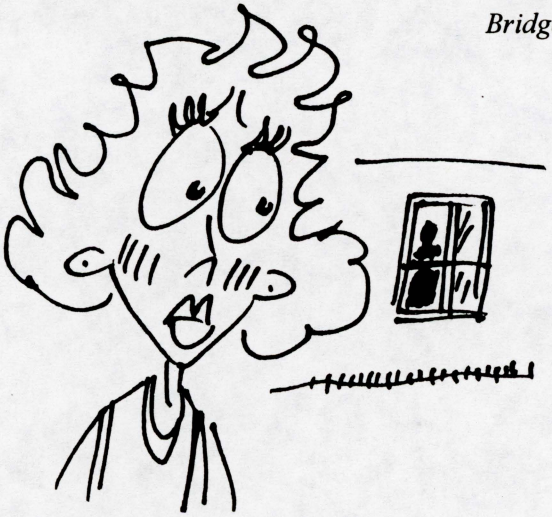
A half hour later, I heard the door open. I stopped breathing. I listened. I just knew he had gotten into the house. I was dead. This would be the end of my life. I trembled all over and cried hysterically.

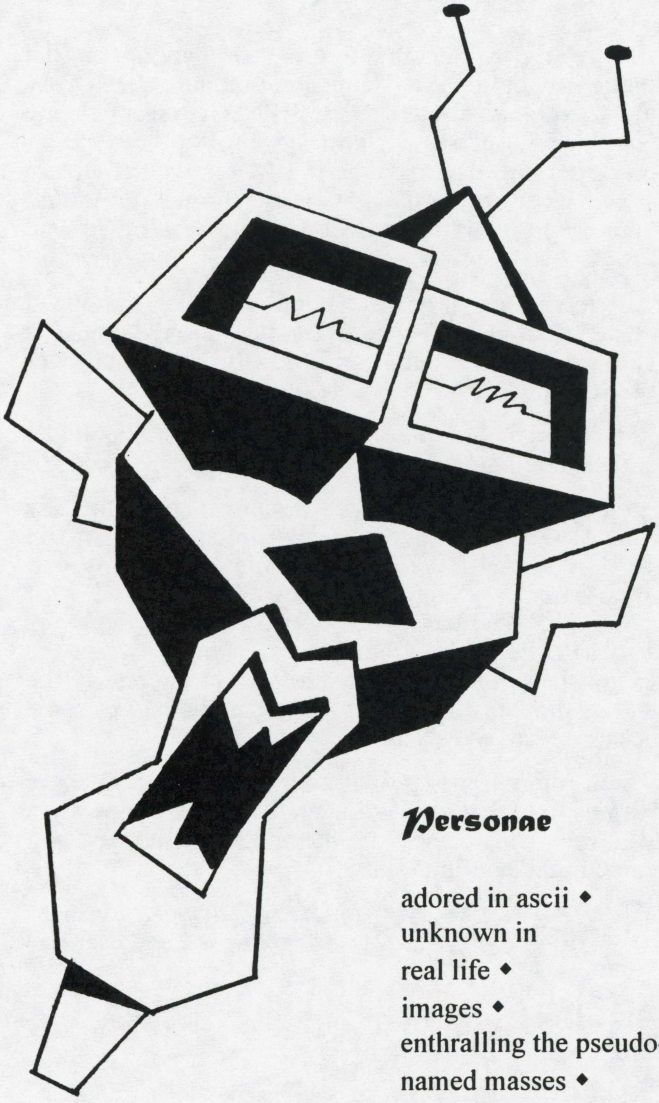
I heard a voice calling my name. "Nicollette, Nicollette. Where are you? We're home."

It was the Sheridans. Finally, a rescue. They called my name again, but I could not move. I could not speak. I was in shock. When they finally found me, they knew something was terribly wrong. After they calmed me down, I explained what had happened. Mr. Sheridan went downstairs to check the grounds and to call the police from his car phone. When the police finally got there, they were unable to find anyone in the area. I knew they thought I was crazy. My parents had to come and get me because I was too shaken up to drive.

The next morning I got a call from a very angry boyfriend. He was livid that I did not open the door for him when he drove all the way over to check on me and that I ran past him twice as he stood in the pouring rain.

Bridgett Simms





Personae

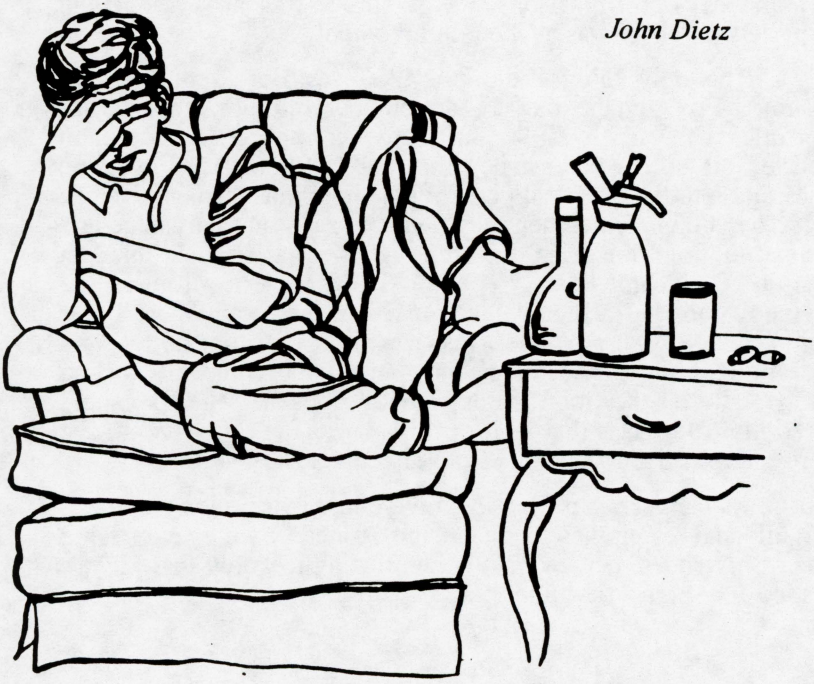
adored in ascii ◆
unknown in
real life ◆
images ◆
enthralling the pseudo-
named masses ◆
no netless
existence ◆

April Waters

Stunned by Reality

It's just the little things that make such a big deal for certainties that hallucinate into an unknown language--unbearable to interpret being spoken with pieces of broken reality transparent strategies boots of distress laced with confusion walk through a dark wilderness like footprints prefabricated in the sand until a foreign liquid substance taking the shape of a wave washes out the existence of what your brain masons chiseled deep among the subconscious blankness strolls with stupidity upon your out-take exhaling backup that fills the tubes of intake a compass of impurity reaches out in the time of need flashes you a moonlight reflection of an undirectional light that reigns at the end of the tunnel--Reminiscing of cranial hieroglyphics that has a folk-loring narrator who preaches of seasonal eras on a soap box of remedies guiding the way with a fire-lit wand to prevail as a scholar out in the fields of deception one day overlooking the endless domain.

John Dietz



My Faithful Companion

I can remember the day Beth brought me home from the toy store as if it were yesterday. All day long children and parents walked past and stopped to gaze at me and my friends. As time passed, almost everyone else on my shelf was chosen by a loving child. I tried to keep my hopes up that someone would want to take me home to cherish. It was getting very late and I was starting to panic. Then, out of nowhere, there was this darling little brown-eyed, brown-haired, sweetie-pie, looking straight at me and smiling. At that moment, I knew that I was finally going to my new home.

I have so many wonderful memories of my life with Beth. From day one she took me everywhere and showed me off to everyone. We went to the movies, out to dinner, and even to play over at her friends' houses. There I got a chance to be with other dolls. It was always so much fun. They fed us, changed our clothes, and played with us all day long. I especially loved going away on vacations. I have traveled by car, train and plane. Beth these things have not diminished Beth's feelings for me. She has even took me away to college. There I got the chance to live with her and her sorority sisters. This surely was an eye-opening experience. There was never a dull moment.

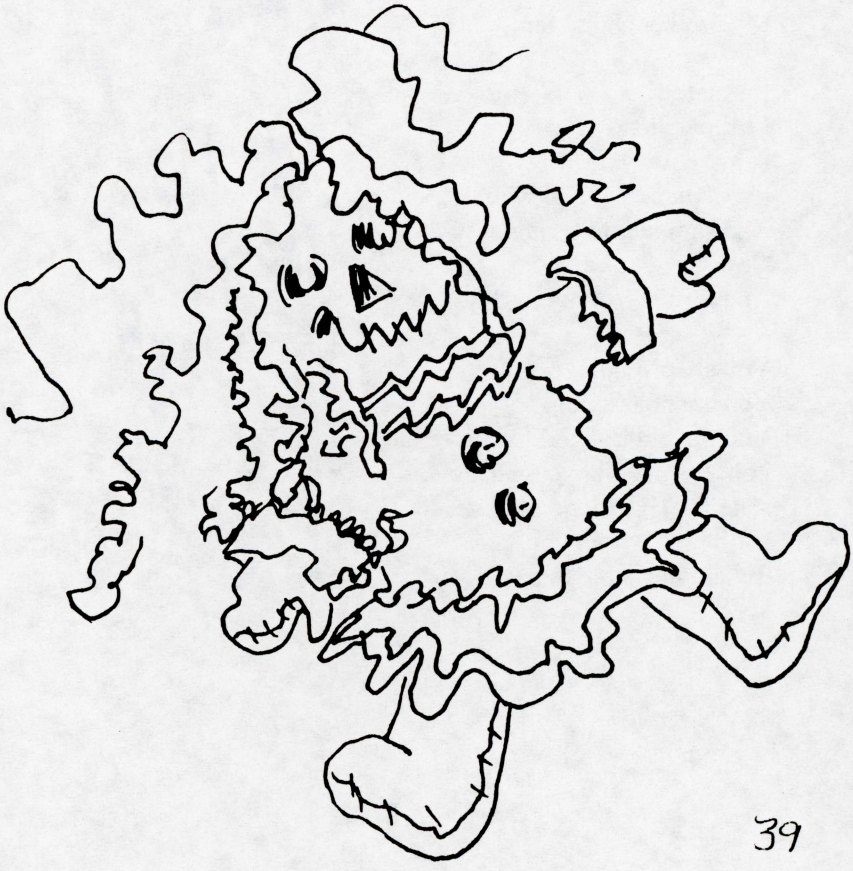
The only thing I did not like was Beth's big brother Danny. Boy, did he like to torment her through me. It was horrible. The worst was the time Beth went out for the afternoon and left me on her bed as she usually did. Shortly, Danny came sneaking into the room with one of his obnoxious teenage friends. First they grabbed me, then they tied a noose around my neck and hung me from the light fixture. After what seemed like an eternity, Beth came home. You could hear her cries from all the way down the hall. Finally, she burst into the room where I was being held hostage. She was waving a ransom letter and screaming frantically while Danny and his friend were rolling hysterically on the floor. Beth quickly loosened the ropes and freed me. Boy, was that a close call! I was never so glad to see her as she hurried to save me from my captors.

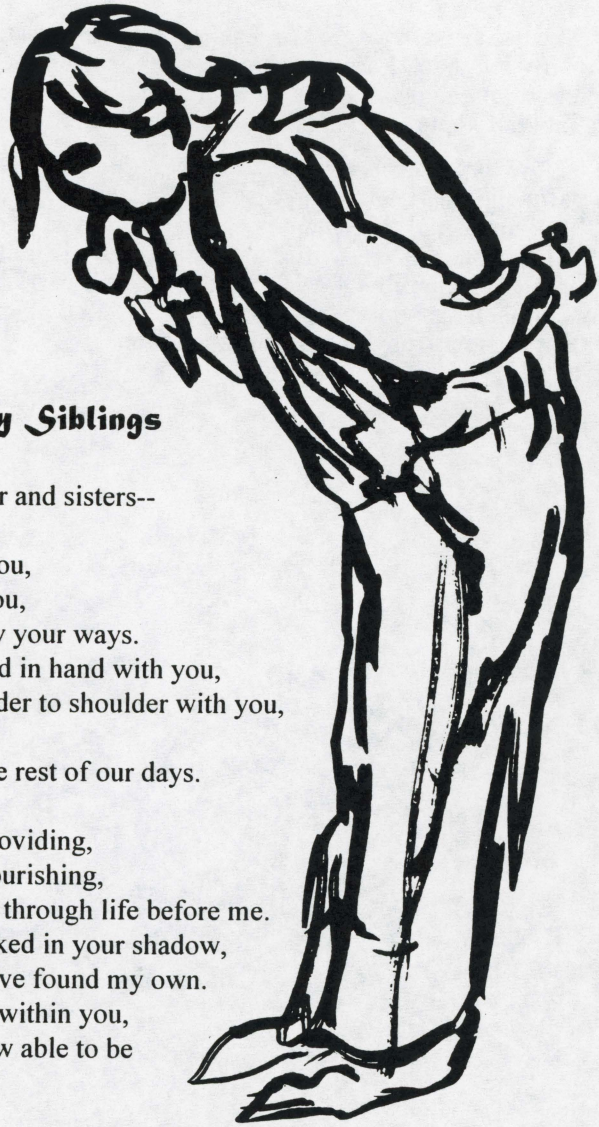
As the years have passed, my yellow hair no longer shines brightly and my clothes are faded and stained. I am even missing one of my shoes. However, it is comforting to know that always made it a point to lovingly repair me when I start to fall

apart. She has sewn my right arm back in place and restitched the seam on my left side. I am lucky to have an owner who loves me regardless of my haggard appearance. It is her unconditional love for me that has kept our friendship strong for so many years.

Now that Beth is 22 years old, she does not need me as much as in the past. Of course she still sleeps with me every night, but I am afraid that one day she will not even need me for that. I know that the day will come when she will outgrow her need for me. Hopefully, I will not end up where I started--on someone's shelf--spending my lonely days watching people go about their business, paying no attention to me.

Beth A. Bondroff





To My Siblings

My brother and sisters--

I imitate you,
I follow you,
And I envy your ways.
I walk hand in hand with you,
And shoulder to shoulder with you,
Now,
And for the rest of our days.

You are providing,
You are nourishing,
You travel through life before me.
I once walked in your shadow,
But now I've found my own.
I still hide within you,
But am now able to be
Seen.

Sarah Coakley

FINI

Villa Julie
COLLEGE
1996